

Spirit Earth

We Are Evolutionaries

- by Lynn Fleming

Awakening as the Powers of the Universe

My new iPad won't accept the word "evolutionaries." The technology insists instead on "revolutionaries." This is somewhat accurate for we are revolutionary evolutionaries. In his new book, *Evolutionaries*, Carter Phipps explains the morphing of "revolutionaries" to "evolutionaries." But what does this mean? Phipps says, "First, Evolutionaries are cross-disciplinary generalists. Second, Evolutionaries are developing the capacity to cognize the vast timescales of our evolutionary history. Third, Evolutionaries embody a new spirit of optimism."

On reading this, I was struck by the depth of the evolutionary vision at The Well, which embodies all of the characteristics Phipps describes. Rooted in the teachings of Teilhard de Chardin, Thomas Berry, Brian Swimme, and other pioneers, we at The Well have become evolutionaries as we immerse ourselves in the wonder of the Universe Story. How well do you know the evolutionary part of yourself, the part of you that is excited by change and that is willing to take the risk to co-create the unborn future?

We have a great opportunity now to awaken the evolutionary part of self as we prepare for Birth 2012 (<http://birth2012.com/>). Because we have been standing on the edge of evolution for more than ten years at The Well, it is no surprise that we are responding to Barbara Marx Hubbard's call to plan a Planetary Birthday event on December 22, 2012. Barbara invites us to turn what some say is doomsday into a planetary birthday. Also, because we at The Well are aware of the synergy that results from cooperation and collaboration, it is not surprising that we

have teamed with the Wheaton Franciscan spirituality center, Tau Center in Wheaton, Illinois, to plan a novel series, "A Call to Awaken" (For further information about schedule of events and registration, please visit <http://www.csjthewell.org>) Our call to awaken is primal, coming from the heart of the cosmos. It is a call from the far distant past and from the far distant future to awaken the powers that are within us in order to transform and evolve.



As we respond to this call throughout our seven-week program, we will ask the central questions: What no longer serves life? What serves life? "A Call to Awaken" is a series that will guide us along the "pathways" described by Michael Crosby in his book *Repair My House*. We will explore the Cosmic Way, the Way of Consciousness, the Way of Connectedness, the Way of Community, the Way of Compassion, the Way of Contemplation, the Christic Way. And we add two more "Cs" of our own: the Way of Cataclysm and the Way of Creativity." As we travel along

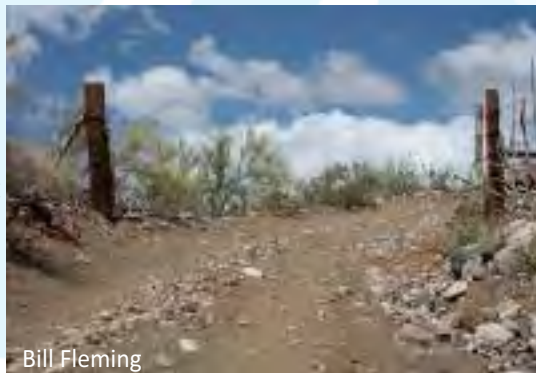
EDITOR'S LETTER

We cannot wait for the world to turn, for times to change that we might change with them, for the revolution to come and carry us around in its new course. We are the future. We are the revolution.

-- Beatrice Bruteau

We hear from Lynn Fleming in this edition of *SpiritEarth* that not only are we the revolution—the revolutionaries—we are, in fact, the *evolutionaries*.

Welcome to our invitation and entry into the birthing process of the new planetary consciousness, a process that is happening in so many ways, by so many people all over Earth. This edition of *SpiritEarth* celebrates humanity's choice to evolve, our decision to gather with others in order to intentionally move to a consciousness of wholeness, oneness, communion.



Lynn's article provides a beautifully synthesized overview of what is happening around the world as well as opportunities for *SpiritEarth* readers from far and wide to participate directly in the gatherings, activities, and celebrations that The Well, in collaboration with Tau Center, will host around the December 21-22 Planetary Birthday.

Ann Schreckenberger writes of her questions, her struggle, her journey toward the new consciousness and helps us to recognize that it is a journey most effectively shared in a community of companion seekers.

John Surette, SJ, whom you may know as the editor of the forerunner to this publication, offers the story of his own awakening.

Please join with us—at The Well, at Tau Center, at The Call to Awaken Birth 2012 Hub at shiftmovement.com, or by submitting your art creation—as we “stand on the outermost edge of evolution...to co-create the unborn future and to celebrate our planetary birth!”

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SpiritEarth

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Mission Statement

SpiritEarth is a publication that expands and advances The Well's mission as a regional center for telling and engaging our Sacred Universe Story and fostering the evolving role of humankind in this great drama.

One Person's Story

- by John Surette, SJ

I was ten years of age in 1945 when the USA dropped the atomic bomb on the Japanese city of Hiroshima. It was the seventh of August, and some 140,000 innocent people were killed immediately or within a few days as a result of burns and radiation. Three days later the bomb was dropped on Nagasaki and some 70,000 innocents were killed.

I remember assembling two large scrapbooks filled with pictures of the explosions and devastation, pictures that I had cut out of magazines and newspapers. Obviously these two events had a big impact on my young psyche. I did not have the necessary words at that time but on a deep intuitive level I knew that we humans were capable of "biocide" – not just homicide, suicide and genocide, but biocide, the killing of vast sections of Earth's community of life. At that tender age, I had a sense that we humans were facing ultimacies. If you look into my eyes today, you might see a sadness there, a sadness that I believe first appeared when I was ten years old.

During my early adolescent years, I was gifted with some powerful religious experiences in the context of the natural world. I remember staring into the coals of campfires late into the night, looking up at the stars and hearing them speak to me out of their silence, and contemplating the shaft of moonlight on the waters of the pond alluring me into some unknown future. In these experiences, I felt at home within the Universe. I felt a oneness with this much larger reality. I experienced wonder and amazement. I even knew that I was loved. Looking back on these adolescent experiences, I am able to discover the arrow, the direction, of my entire adult life.

Here I am writing these words at the age of seventy-seven, an age at which I once again am aware of biocide, a biocide that is presently well under way. Forests are shrinking, water tables are falling, soils are eroding, fisheries are collapsing, rivers are running dry, glaciers and ice caps are melting, coral reefs are bleaching, the ocean is becoming acidic, Earth's atmosphere is warming, plant and animal species are going into extinction at an ever increasing rate.

We humans are intimately involved in this biocide. An

increasing number of our children are being born sick. More and more of them are suffering from cancer, reduced lung capacity, and the weakening of their immune systems. Our human institutions that seemed to serve us well in a previous time are now under increasing stress. Who can deny that this is presently true of our economic, legal, educational, medical, and religious institutions?

Searching deep within, I find two major responses to the biocide. Part of me says that what is happening to Earth and its human community is beyond our capacity to reverse. This part of me feels lacking both in hope and in creative energies. The other part of me says that it is no



accident that we are living at this time of Earth's diminishment and destruction, and, therefore, we are called to search deep within ourselves to find the creativity required to meet the challenges of this twenty-first century.

Where can I personally find this necessary creativity? I could go back to 1945 with my awareness of biocide or to my early adolescence with its experiences of the natural world that spoke to me so strongly and intimately. I choose, however, to go back to 1989 at Port Burwell in Ontario. I was attending a program featuring the cultural historian and "geologist" Thomas Berry.

Thomas first spoke of the Divine-human relationship, and I responded to all that he said since I had always been fascinated by this relationship. He then went on to speak about the human-human relationship. My antennae

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Where Are My People?

- by Ann Schreckenberger

Where are my people? It is the question that emerges over and over as I walk the labyrinthine path of my spiritual journey. It shows up when something deep inside me feels restless and unsatisfied—when I have the sense that something is missing and there is an intense longing for something more. It shows up when I am seeking out beyond fixed boundaries, out on the edge of things, where chaos and creativity stir up the soul.

Where are my people? The question was prodding me again in June of 2009 after I left the Institute for Spiritual Leadership where I trained as a spiritual director and worked on the staff for three years. Leaving ISL was difficult because the work was meaningful and I had close personal relationships; yet I felt restless and unsettled inside. For years I had been yearning for a more expansive spirituality, feeling trapped in an old theology that felt too small, too



certain, and no longer congruent with 21st century knowledge. It was the impetus for my entering ISL's training program in the fall of 2004. Sometime later I read a little book, *Hidden Heart of the Cosmos*, written by Brian Swimme. I woke up to a new way of seeing where we are in the cosmos and who we are as a human species on Earth. My love affair with Universe ignited.

Where are my people? I read that little book over and over, highlighting almost every sentence with a canary-yellow marker. When that didn't feel like enough, I underlined the sentences in blue ink, circling key words and phrases, sometimes entire paragraphs. I felt as if Brian and I were communicating on a first-name basis. I often wrote the word "YES" in the margins using huge capital letters followed by several large exclamation points!!! And then I added a colored tag to the page so I could easily find it again when I couldn't remember exactly what he said. I resonated so deeply with Brian's thoughts, and, although the concepts were challenging, I craved to absorb and

embody every insight into my conscious awareness. I loved the new language, phrases like "all-nourishing abyss," and I wanted more. I began to imagine rituals birthed from the knowledge of billions of galaxies and trillions and trillions of stars. The mysteries evoked were huge, wondrous, unfathomable. The carbon in my skin, the calcium in my bones, the iron in my red blood cells were forged in the furnace of stars. I am literally stardust. I am Universe in person reflecting on the stars that created the elements inside my body. This was it, the cosmic spirituality my heart intuited and longed for. Universe is not a place; it's a story, an on-going cosmogenesis that over billions of years created me. Being awestruck became my spiritual practice. Embodying the creation story Universe is revealing became my life-giving passion.

Where are my people? I felt lonely seeking out on the edge of things beyond boundaries of established traditions. I wanted to be with

other people embracing this story. I longed for a community of seekers, not just a place to take classes but a community with a shared vision and a love for Universe as primary revelation. I wanted to delve deeper into this new spiritual consciousness. I needed a place to speak out loud and see someone else's head nodding in agreement. I wanted to be with other people when shatterings occurred and powerful emotions like ecstasy, anger and fear erupted. I wanted to be part of a community with people who called me by name and understood what I was saying and knew what I was feeling because they were thinking and feeling it too.

Where are my people? In July 2009, just a month after leaving ISL, I attended the 1st Annual Summer Institute at The Well. In September I began participating in classes. In spring 2010, we studied Brian Swimme's Powers of the Universe. We came to understand we were one with the Powers. Energies surging throughout Universe were surging through me. I began to recognize the power of Allurement as the restless energy inside me and heard its

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Voices from The Well Community

I was a new “convert” to the Universe Story, my mind filled with new knowledge and insights, and I was feeling a hope, both for myself and our world, that I had not felt in quite some time. I knew I needed to process these insights and let them sink in, so “marinating” in them sounded like just the thing. I expected some deepening to occur within myself, but hadn’t counted on the sense of community that would develop in the time our group spent together. At the Summer Institute at The Well in June, I sat with some of my fellow “marinaters.” When it came time to leave, I started to cry, overwhelmed with the sense of community I felt with them.... It wasn’t that I would “miss” them; it was more a feeling of being completely overwhelmed by God’s grace and love, knowing this is where I belong, these are the people I belong to, this is “home” to me, and I need to be here just as I need the sun and the earth and the stars and the trees. I wasn’t able to explain it all at the time, but my companions seemed to understand even the language of tears.

Bobbie Nye

participant in Marinating in the Mystery of the Emergent Universe class, 2011-2012

I can’t remember if it was during or after Vatican II, but I belonged to the Thomas More Book Club. I was reading so many books that asked the questions I was asking, and I remember thinking, “they’re wondering what I am wondering.” One of the most pivotal books I read was *Original Blessing* by Matthew Fox. That started it for me. One day I signed up for Fr. John Surrette’s class at The Well and was introduced to Brian Swimme. That started me on a lifetime of the Universe Story! I am so grateful I have lived long enough to know this story. The result is I am left with a thirst for more and an ever-increasing thirst for God. I feel so at home at The Well. I have participated in so many programs. I don’t even know where I would be without it.

Barb Barta

devoted member of The Well community



The Well Community

A concept I am marinating in is entanglement. Any two particles that interact are affected forever. When reflecting on how this relates to community, we are all interacting with each other continually. What an awesome responsibility. And how powerful we are. I would say most are not aware that their thoughts and feelings are affecting the “community” and have no responsibility to choose wisely. When we gather in small groups to support and validate these new concepts, then we are actively creating a new consciousness, which will then affect those we rub shoulders with outside the group. How important it is to support ourselves by being with those who are evolving consciousness! Find your companions!!

Patricia Withers

participant in Marinating in the Mystery of the Emergent Universe class, 2011-2012

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Where are my people? - continued from page 4

voice asking, “Where are my people?” Like elementary particles seeking to create atoms, atoms seeking to create molecules, molecules seeking to create stars, and stars seeking to create galaxies, I was seeking my people to become a co-creator in an evolutionary community birthing a new human consciousness. Allurement is the energy that draws us towards what and whom we desire most. It is the energy humans name *love*. My restlessness allured me to The Well. I found my people and my people found me.

Where are my people? Is that a question you find asking yourself? Are you feeling restless and longing for more? Do you long to hear your own inner voice, be still and contemplate its wisdom? Are you seeking out beyond established boundaries? Do you yearn to be with other seekers, to delve deeper into the story Universe is telling and marinate in its unfathomable mysteries? Do you want to co-create with an evolutionary community participating in the birth of a new humanity? Come to The Well. Your people are here.

each pathway, we will call upon the Powers of the Universe for guidance in birthing the unknown future. These ten Powers, including Transmutation, change at the level of the individual and Transformation, change at the level of the whole community, are Brian Swimme's attempt to explain what modern science has learned about the way the universe has been constructed.



Bridget Spurduto

I have been drawn to the Powers of the Universe since the DVD series first became available. I studied them and have often contemplated how they could be woven into the fabric of our spiritual language and practice. After hearing Barbara Marx Hubbard speak about celebrating a Planetary Birthday, I wrote this poem in an attempt to integrate the Powers of the Universe, Birth 2012, and all that I was learning about evolutionary spirituality.

Evolving 2012

Aware
*of the summons
go to the
powers of the universe
at this moment
dreaming, conceiving
and gestating
the evolution of
Life*

Approach
*the power of centration
for guidance
in bridging
ancient wisdom
with the promise
of humanity
evolving in
Love*

Address
*the parts of self
resisting
deep perceiving
and
creative response
to the
evolutionary impulse to
Change*

Align
*in stillness
with
oneness and unity
ground of being self
eternally
dwelling in peace
within
Us*

Awaken
*evolutionary self
drawing us
into the future
as a universal
humanity
regenerating and
transforming
Earth*

Attune
*with the
power of radiance
unleashing artists
drummers, painters
weavers and poets
to dance a planetary
Birth*

Allow

What I didn't fully realize when I wrote this poem was that my words had power. It is no small thing to call upon the Powers of the Universe because they do answer! I was at a place in my life where I had withdrawn from committees and causes. I had no intention of becoming a co-organizer of a comprehensive transformational process to awaken anything. I called to the Powers poetically, in innocence, and they responded. Now I am stepping forth with you and millions around the globe to initiate the "Great Work" of consciously being and evolving the Powers of the Universe in human form. We are Earth and we are Universe, and these Powers pervade every galaxy, every organism, every cell of our bodies, and our consciousness. They are divine evolutionary energies within us.

In order to awaken these Powers, we need to look to the past, to the ways they evolved the universe during its 13.7-billion-year history. The Powers of the Universe maintained and sustained Earth for over 4 billion years until humans took dominion and brought the planet, in less than 150,000 years, to the point of collapse. Across deep time, 150,000 years is but a moment. Our planet is withering; our institutions—economic, political, religious—are in crisis. We see what is going wrong with our ecosystems, but we aren't finding our way out as a species. We don't want to leave our children and grandchildren with a bleak future, but, collectively, we resist deep change. Often this feels so big that we don't know if our efforts can make a difference.

In 1977, Matthew Fox taught a course in spiritual direction at the Center for Creation-Centered Spirituality, which at the time shared space with Mundelein College Chicago; it was a privilege to be one of his students as I pursued my graduate studies. In that course, I encountered a story of the cosmos that resonated deep within me and blended effortlessly with what I had been taught as a child—that both science and spirituality revealed the presence of the Creator in everything around me. In the context of the Universe Story, I was re-energized to search more deeply and challenged to use my creative and intuitive faculties to explore the world. I was surprised, however, that the story also produced an unexpected resistance in me vis-a-vis my new-found academic understanding of traditional theology (which regarded creation-centered spirituality with grave suspicion). A decades-long tightrope walk ensued for me, with personal conviction and professional expectation struggling for balance. There was no refuge of a supportive community to turn to until twenty-eight years later when I once again found myself in spiritual direction training at The Well, where the Sacred Universe was spoken of openly. Here the brave, adventurous and courageous of heart sought Divine Wisdom. Here wonder and awe mingled with critical thinking and contemplative discussion to my great delight. The Well continues to be a sacred space in which I am able to search, learn, imagine, write, discover and be. And now I am not alone in doing so.

Susan Dehn Matthews
Author of *No Longer Silent: The Empowerment of Women in the Gospels*

We Are Evolutionaries - continued from page 6

Yet, we remain optimistic. We are aware of the winds of change in every corner of the planet and sense that we are in the midst of a major shift in human consciousness. As we stand on the outermost edge of evolution on this planet at this time, let's take a step into the unknown as the Powers of the Universe, as evolutionaries, to co-create the unborn future and to celebrate our planetary birth!

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Note: We invite you, our *SpirithEarth* community, to join us in "A Call to Awaken" either in person or from a distance. Information can be found in the fall brochure from The Well and on our Birth 2012 Hub at the Shift Movement website. On the website, as we go through the seven weeks of preparation for the Planetary Birthday, we will post information from each session on the Pathways and Powers, along with reflection questions. Using the site's blog, you will be able to respond to these questions and connect with us and other evolutionaries around the world. Shift Movement sign-up:
<http://shiftmovement.com/register?email>
Join our group: <http://shiftmovement.com/groups/birth-2012/la-grange-birth-2012-hub>.
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One Person's Story - continued from page 2

immediately became extended because much of my priestly life had been devoted to the promotion of social justice and to making a response to the pathos of the human situation. He concluded his talk by speaking of the Earth-human relationship. He stressed that continued progress in the Divine-human and in the human-human, now for the first time ever in human history, depends on progress in the Earth-human relationship. When I heard these words, from deep down inside of me there emerged a passionate Yes! In that very moment I knew that I would spend the rest of my life focusing on the Earth-human, knowing that in doing this I would still be working on the human-human and the Divine human.

So, here I am writing my story. That ten year old boy and that adolescent boy are very much present to me as I write. On the level of my soul I am challenged by two questions. The first is: How can I work with others to help nurture a mutually enhancing relationship between Earth and the human community? The second is: How can I work with others to make a religious response to the fate of Earth? Both of these questions are gifts to me. I share them with you, the reader, and I hope that you will meditate upon them and be open to whatever emerges within you on the level of your soul.



The Well

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Birth 2012

A Call to Awaken the Artists

As part of our Planetary Birthday opening ritual, we call upon the artists: the writers, storytellers, poets, painters, collage creators, the song writers, photographers, actors, dancers and all to respond to this question: What no longer serves life on planet Earth? (This needs to be on a piece of paper that can be rolled.) Bring or send your creation to The Well, and we will place it in on a large scroll. The scroll will be offered to a solstice fire for transformation on December 21 at the opening of our all-night vigil.

If you like, create a second piece of art using any form, material, or media and respond to the question: What serves life? This piece will become part of our sunrise birthday celebration on the morning of December 22 as we awaken into a new human consciousness. (You may take this one back home with you.)

Send all pieces of art to The Well, 1515 West Ogden Avenue, La Grange Park, IL 60526 or submit them to:
www.csjthewell.org by December 18.

SpiritEarth

is supported by contributions
from our readers.

To make a donation, or
for information about programs,
retreats, or sabbaticals,
please visit our website:
www.csjthewell.org.

Donations can also be mailed to:

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Thank you for your support!